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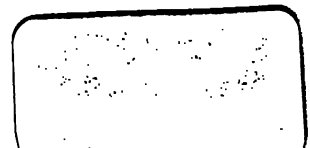
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A
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TO
HIS GRACE
THE
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,
ON
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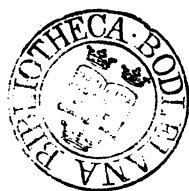
"BILL TO RESTRAIN PLURALITIES."

BY THE
REV. EDWARD HULL, M.A.,
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, ATTACHED TO THE SCHOOL FOR THE
BLIND, IN LIVERPOOL, AND AUTHOR OF "THE INSTITUTION AND
ABUSE OF ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY."

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A LETTER

TO

HIS GRACE

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

MY LORD,

As your Grace was pleased to say, in your letter to me of the 18th of May last, acknowledging the receipt of my publication on *The Institution and Abuse of Ecclesiastical Property*, that you would take an opportunity of reading it, I felt exceedingly anxious to know what would be the nature of the Bill to restrain pluralities, which your Grace, some weeks ago, gave notice that you were about to submit to the legislature,—in order that I might see how far my suggestion, with regard to pluralities, had met with your Grace's approbation.

I have read with great attention the report of your Grace's speech, on bringing in the Bill, in the House of Lords, on the 30th of August, as it is given in *The Mirror of Parliament*; and I rejoice to find that something has at length been attempted by the hierarchy, with a view

of *lessening*, at least, the sore evil of pluralities, which the Church of England has so long laboured under, and which so many of its best and ablest divines have so long and so bitterly lamented.

Whether or not the Bill, if passed into a law, will effect all the good which your Grace, no doubt, expects to arise from it, is, I think, a dubious point; but, at all events, your Grace must have earned the respect of every true friend of our Established Church by your endeavour thus to “purge away” a part of “her dross.”

It has been the fashion to say that *this period of excitement* is the worst of all times to make alterations in the Church; and I understand that very severe animadversions have been made upon me in high quarters, for laying open the evil of pluralities at such a period, and for setting forth the true origin of tithes,*—in order to

* *The Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Monthly Magazine* had all published to the world, in laboured articles, that tithes were not imposed by the legislature, but were the gratuitous donation of the pious owners of the soil; and I conceived that many persons might be induced to think that the right of the legislature to interfere with the regulation of tithes was affected by this consideration. Feeling confident, therefore, that it could be consistent neither with honesty nor good policy that the claim of the Church to the tithes should be supported by a misrepresentation or a suppression of historical facts, I thought it right to speak the truth; and I trust that I have clearly shown that tithes were *first instituted* in this kingdom by

show that the legislature has a right so to regulate their distribution, that they may answer the end for which they were originally instituted. But now that your Grace, in conjunction with other prelates, has thought fit, at this perilous time, to propose a Bill which is to make great alterations in the Church, I trust that I shall cease to be an object of vituperation on this ground. I think, indeed, that it is probable that *this very excitement* caused your Grace, and your fellow-labourers, to frame the Bill which you have brought in, as it caused me to compose the work which I have published.—When the siege is approaching, it is surely high time to examine the citadel, to point out its weak parts, and to recommend the repairing of it with all speed, so that it may be able to withstand the assaults of the enemy. The Church of England is well worth repairing. Its foundation rests upon a rock, and will last for ever.—Parts of its superstructure are unsound; but these may easily be amended, and with God's blessing it may still remain the stronghold of Christianity in the earth.

the *power of the Church* in a superstitious age, and that they were afterwards *legally established by the state*, under princes to whom the power of the Church was necessary for the support of their authority. If the writers of any of the articles in the above-mentioned publications can confute me, let them do so, or they must remain under the imputation of having dealt forth false information to the public.

By the present law, as your Grace has observed, a clergyman may hold any number of livings, provided they are under value in the King's books (although this circumstance is no criterion of their present value) ; since the means by which he may be prevented from doing so, are seldom resorted to. Of benefices, which are above £8 *per annum* in the King's books, he can hold only one without a dispensation ; but by a dispensation, the qualification for demanding which may in these days be readily obtained, the clergy in general may each hold two of these benefices, provided the parishes are within thirty reputed or forty-five statute miles of each other.

In consequence of this license for pluralities, and of the non-residence of the clergy from other causes, according to the bishops' returns in the year 1807, in 11,164 parishes there were only 5040 (query, 5080?) resident incumbents, of whom some were only partially resident. Calling the* number of parishes, therefore, in which there were resident incumbents 5080, the number of parishes without resident incumbents was 6124 : and this non-residence, as the Earl of Harrowby justly

* See the Earl of Harrowby's speech in the House of Lords, June 18th, 1810. Of these 5080 virtually resident incumbents, only 4412 were *legally* resident, 152 living in the parish, but not in the parsonage, 176 living near the parish, but not in it, and 340 being exempt from residence on account of cathedral or college offices, many of whom might probably be resident part of the year.

remarked, did not arise from the *small value* of the benefices, and their consequent inability to support resident incumbents; since upon 7167 of the *richer* benefices, 3611 incumbents were non-resident. Now as "those who were non-resident upon one benefice, on account of residence upon another, were 1797," the number of incumbents, who were non-resident for other reasons, must have been 4327. Of these, 632 were non-resident "from miscellaneous causes," i. e., causes which satisfied their ordinaries; and the remaining 3695 were non-resident, some because there were no fit habitations upon their benefices, and some without being able to assign any reasonable cause whatever. The penalty for non-residence at that time was a mere trifle;* and, therefore, many of the clergy, regardless of the solemn obligation which they had taken upon themselves, deserted the flocks committed to their care. This penalty, however, has been greatly increased by the 43 Geo. III., and the 57 Geo. III.; and there can be no doubt that the incumbents now non-resident, without a legal or a reasonable cause, are very much reduced in number.

* By 21 Henry VIII., if an incumbent absented himself, without legal cause of absence, one month together, or two months at several times in one year, he was to forfeit for every such default the sum of £10.

But although the number of incumbents non-resident without any cause assigned has thus diminished, the number (1797) non-resident on account of pluralities has greatly increased.—Your Grace is reported to have stated, that, according to more recent returns made by the bishops, “2100 benefices are holden by pluralists.” But as the Earl of Harrowby is reported to have said,* on the same evening, that according to the same returns, “the number of parishes which are deprived of resident incumbents is 2000,” and as your Grace is also reported to have said that there are 2000 pluralists; I presume that your Grace is to be understood as stating, that 2100 parishes are now deprived of resident incumbents, owing to the system of pluralities. How many are non-resident from† other causes, your Grace has not said.

Now surely no person, who has the interest of our Established Church at heart, can refrain

* *Mirror of Parliament*, p. 1771.

† A return ought to be made of the *whole number* of parishes which are without resident incumbents, and also of those which are *without resident curates*, and of those in which only *single duty* is performed.—When I resided in Suffolk, in the year 1819, *nine adjoining parishes* (of two of which I was myself curate), beginning with Lindsey, and ending with Little Finborough, were all without resident incumbents, and eight of them without resident curates. Single duty only was performed in all of them, and that in one of them only once a month; and I believe that single duty only is now performed in them.

from lamenting that, independently of the absence from their benefices of so many incumbents "on account of cathedral and college offices," and* "from miscellaneous causes," amounting to nearly 1000, so large a number as 2100 should be non-resident in consequence of pluralities. This is, indeed, as good Bishop Bedell called it, "an intolerable abuse," "a most pestilent and deadly disease;" or, in the language of Bishop Burnet, "a scandal that may justly make us blush;" or, as Dean Prideaux termed it, "a great sin as well as a great shame to any government where it is permitted." I repeat, therefore, that your Grace has justly earned the respect of every true friend of our Establishment by the effort which you have made to diminish this grievous abuse.

The Bill, which your Grace has proposed for this end, enacts that no person in future shall hold more than two benefices, whatever may be their value in the King's books, and that the churches of such two benefices shall be within thirty statute miles of each other: and your Grace conceives that, by these means, the number of parishes now deprived of resident incumbents, owing to pluralities, will be reduced from 2100 to 700. The distance between the bene-

* The chief of these causes I presume to be the ill health either of themselves or members of their families.

fices of a pluralist, which are above £8 in the King's books, being now measured from the boundaries of the two parishes, the distance between the churches may be considered as fifty miles. Your Grace is thus represented to have expressed your sentiments upon this point:—
 “If fifty miles is the distance at present allowed, and thirty as lessened by the Bill, every church may be considered as the centre of a circle, of which the area will be in proportion to the *diameter*, and in this particular case the greater circle will be to the smaller as about *one to three*; and, consequently, the number of benefices, now tenable together by dispensation, will be less by two-thirds than at present. Allow a similar reduction for livings under £8 (which I conceive to be under the mark), and we may fairly conclude that the number of pluralists will, in the end, be reduced from upwards of 2000 to about 700.”

*Now it is plain that your Grace did not express yourself in such terms as these. Your Grace, no doubt, said, that as the areas of circles are in proportion to the *squares* of their diameters, in this case, the area of the greater circle would be to that of the smaller as about

* Mr. Barrow should really employ more able reporters, and not allow such blunders to be printed in so important a work.

three to one (25 : 9.) ; and from this fact your Grace concludes that the number of benefices now tenable together by dispensation will be less by two-thirds than at present, and that the number of pluralists will, therefore, be reduced from 2100 to 700.

I am afraid, however, that your Grace's conclusion is somewhat too hastily drawn. Granting that the number of benefices now tenable together by dispensation will be less by two-thirds, it will not necessarily follow that the number of pluralists will be diminished in proportion.* I much fear that we shall see such selling and buying, and chopping and changing of livings, especially among the great men of the nation, in order to suit their ecclesiastical property to the smaller circles, as will in great measure defeat your Grace's intention, and probably bring some scandal upon the Church.

But even supposing that this great reduction contemplated by your Grace may be accomplished, and that† only 700 clergymen shall be

* The Earl of Carnarvon says, "I cannot agree that a diminution of the distance will, *pro tanto*, diminish the number of pluralities."

† It must be borne in mind that a vast number, nearly a thousand, will still be absent, "on account of cathedral and college offices"—(I am sorry that the Bill allows this),—and "from miscellaneous causes"; and independently of this number, it is stated in a paper now before me, styled *Awkward Facts respecting the Church of England and her Revenues*, from *Parliamentary Documents*, that "there are 4809 livings

permitted to be absent from their benefices in consequence of pluralities, I still venture to ask whether your Grace is prepared to justify this permission upon *principle*?

The ecclesiastical property in every parish was set apart by law for the maintenance of a resident minister, who should instruct the people in their duty, edify them by his example, keep hospitality among them, and comfort and relieve them in their distresses. This is a part of the preamble of the *Statute of Provisors*,—“That the holy Church of England was founded in the state of prelacy within the realm of England to inform the people of the law of God, and to make hospitality and other works of charity in the places where the churches were founded, and certain possessions were assigned by the founders to sustain the same charge.”—And in the preamble to an act of parliament, passed A.D. 1379, it is set forth that the churches in this kingdom were endowed “to the intent that the same benefices should be given to honest and meet persons of the realm, to serve and honour God diligently, and also to keep hospitality, and to inform and teach the

where the clergyman has no house to live in;” and hence, at the present moment, there are *between seven and eight thousand parishes*, i. e., two-thirds of all the parishes in the kingdom, without resident incumbents.

people, and to do other things pertaining to the care of souls, after the estate and quality of the said benefices"; and various efforts* were at different periods made by the *Commons* to ensure the right application of the ecclesiastical revenues. In the reign of Richard II., they petitioned the King to compel all incumbents to reside upon their benefices. In the reign of Henry IV., they petitioned that every parson should dwell and keep hospitality on his benefice, under pain of the *Statute of Provisors*;—and again, in the same reign, that half the profits of every non-resident incumbent should be forfeited to the crown. In the reign of Henry VI., they petitioned that all clergymen not residing upon their cures should forfeit the whole profits of their benefices, one-half to the King and the other to the patron;—and again, in the same reign, that the patron might be permitted to present anew on the non-residence of an incumbent.

With regard to pluralities, they are contrary to all the ancient canons of the church, and were contrary to the law of England until the passing of the 21 Hen. VIII. And since the passing of that act many efforts have been made to abolish

* In my small work on the *Institution and Abuse of Ecclesiastical Property*, the efforts of the Commons to reform the abuses of the Church are set forth at length.

them in the reigns of Edward VI., Elizabeth, James I., Charles I. and Charles II. During the reign of Mary, and during the Commonwealth, they were totally abolished; and by three several acts of parliament, passed in the reigns of James I., William and Mary, and Anne, the Universities are restricted from presenting any clergyman, already in possession of a benefice with cure, to another such benefice, which under certain circumstances might be placed at their disposal.

Hence it must be evident to every one, that the *evils* arising from pluralities have long been sufficiently glaring. I beg, therefore, respectfully to ask your Grace, whether you are prepared to defend 700 of them upon *principle*? i.e., whether you are prepared to show, either that there is nothing wrong in a clergyman's receiving, for doing nothing, property set apart for the maintenance of a resident incumbent, and paying to a hireling, to whom he commits the care of the parish, the lowest sum which he is permitted to pay; or that the good which arises from enriching some of the clergy with the revenues of two benefices, is greater than the evils which arise from the non-residence of incumbents, the poverty of curates, and the shameful system of *single duty*, which prevails to so lamentable an extent? If your Grace is not prepared

to establish one of these positions, it is plain that the Bill which you have brought in is not *founded on principle*.

The former of these positions your Grace is not likely to maintain abstractedly. The latter has been maintained by some persons; but I hardly think that your Grace will venture to uphold it. The Earl of Harrowby, much to my astonishment, is one of these persons. At the same time that he admits it to be* "a great evil" that 2000 parishes should be deprived of resident incumbents, owing to pluralities, he still maintains that a certain number of pluralities is absolutely necessary to support the respectability of the Church. "I know nothing (says he) that would be so fatal to the respectability of the Church as the entire abolition of pluralities.

* * * I certainly consider that it is most important that there should be considerable and marked gradations in the Church, and that we should not consider it simply as a profession, but as a profession essentially attached to the state, and which ought, therefore, to be maintained in respectability. This feeling you have hitherto acted upon; but if you reduce the whole of the clergymen of this country to the enjoyment of a mere subsistence, I think you will do any thing

* *Mirror of Parliament*, p. 1771.

but provide for the upholding of the dignity of that Church."

I partly incline to think that there must here be some more blundering of the reporter for the *Mirror*. Surely the Earl of Harrowby could not have expressed himself thus. He could not mean to say that the abolition of pluralities would "reduce the whole of the clergymen of this country to the enjoyment of a mere subsistence." How many hundreds of benefices are there in this kingdom, the emoluments of which place the incumbents of them on a level with the country gentry? And, independently of these large livings, there are of deaneries, archdeaconries, prebendships, masterships of hospitals, and other such preferments, without cure of souls, in the Church between *seven and eight hundred*, which may, without any impropriety, be conferred upon the incumbents of benefices with cure. These, surely, together with the bishoprics, which confer nobility upon their possessors, are amply sufficient to uphold the respectability of the Church, as far as its respectability depends upon wealth and station. The "gradations in the Church" are "considerable and marked" enough, without continuing the "sacrilegious" system (as Prideaux calls it) of pluralities. I have little doubt but that the Earl of Harrowby means that the respectability, which the Church

derives from the younger sons of the nobility entering into holy orders, will be diminished by the abolition of pluralities. Fewer of the sons of noblemen and other persons of high station would probably enter into the Church. I have little fear, however, but that the diminution of this species of its respectability, would be more than compensated by the accession of the genuine respectability which it would derive from the residence of all its incumbents among the flocks whom they are appointed to keep. And I am sure that such residence would be much more likely to bring back to the National Church those who have deserted it, than the conferring of pluralities upon all the younger sons of all the aristocracy in the kingdom.

Perhaps the Earl of Harrowby, when he said that "nothing would be so fatal to the respectability of the Church as the entire abolition of pluralities," meant the *stability* of it; intimating that the aristocracy of the land are mainly induced to support it in consequence of the many pluralities in it which are enjoyed by their relatives. I have often heard this argument used, and I do not mean to say that there is no force in it. But this I say, that the Church would stand much more firmly, based on the genuine respect and affection of the people, than on the selfish support of the aristocracy; and, if it were

purified from all its corruptions, I have little doubt but that the affection and respect of the people might yet be regained.

I am glad that your Grace, in diminishing the distance at which pluralities may be held, has not professed to have any other object in view than the diminution of the number of pluralities; —that you have not used as an argument, that pluralists will be able more easily to give their personal attention to both benefices. Your Grace, I have no doubt, quite agrees with Lord Wynford, that “if two livings are so far apart that the two churches cannot be served by one and the same person (Lord Wynford, it seems, thinks *single duty* quite sufficient), it can make no difference whether the distance be thirty or forty-five miles; for, in either case, each parish will be equally under the superintendence of the incumbent.” Every person who has observed the attention paid by non-resident incumbents to their benefices, which are within thirty miles of those on which they reside, will, I am sure, concur in this opinion. I was seven years curate of a parish, the incumbent of which resided within seventeen miles of it; and during the whole of that period he took no more interest in the spiritual concerns of it than any of the absent landlords, nor did he ever once enter the church except for the purpose of examining

the state of the chancel. I have every reason to believe, moreover, that his conduct in this matter did not differ from that of other pluralists in the same diocese. He was an able magistrate, bore the character of a respectable gentleman, and had been tutor of the college to which the benefice belonged. But he seems, in regard to this benefice, to have entertained the sentiments of the author of the *Appeal to the Gentlemen of England*: he “ceased to consider himself as an ecclesiastic, and looked upon himself as a proprietor, possessing his freehold by the law of the land under which the gentlemen of England hold their’s.”

A non-resident incumbent may as well live two hundred miles off as twenty. Those incumbents, indeed, who do the duties of their churches, but do not reside in their parishes, are of little use when compared with resident incumbents: and so thought the Earl of Harrowby twenty years ago. “It is too large an allowance (says he) to include, as virtual residents, all those who reside near and do the duty; for many cases must occur in which the parish sees nothing of its pastor, except when he performs the service of the church once a week, or once a month, in the course of his morning or evening ride.” I therefore take it for granted that your Grace does not

calculate upon any useful personal superintendence from pluralists.

The fact, I have no doubt, is that your Grace, for some reason or other, was afraid of venturing upon the total abolition of pluralities *all at once*. You were probably apprehensive that you should not be able to carry such a measure ; and I believe you would have met with strong opposition. But the country—nay, the clergy, with the exception of pluralists and expectant pluralists—would have supported you, and you would have gained your object. Or perhaps your Grace has a great deference for the old proverb, “violent changes are bad,” and thought it prudent that the change in the law respecting pluralities should be *gradual*. I have a great respect for old proverbs in general ; and this may, in many cases, be listened to with advantage. But I must doubt the wisdom of listening to it with regard to the correction of an admitted and notorious abuse. If a man were in the habit of committing some gross sin every day, it would scarcely be sound counsel to advise him to commit it only twice a week ; or if a man were tormented by three decayed teeth, he would not evince much wisdom by suffering the dentist to remove only two of them. These comparisons may be homely, but I think they are in point.—

As, however, your Grace's bill does not, like former bills passed upon the same subject, affect *existing* pluralists, its operation, had it abolished pluralities, would have been sufficiently gradual.

It has been objected that, if pluralities should be altogether abolished, there would be great difficulty, in consequence of the diminution in the number of curates, in supplying benefices with incumbents as they might become vacant. I cannot think, however, that there is sufficient force in this argument to establish the necessity of pluralities. There would still be a very large number of curates kept by incumbents, non-resident "from miscellaneous causes," by invalids, and by incumbents of parishes of large population. But should the supply not prove sufficient, there would be no great hardship in* compelling the incumbents of livings of a certain value to keep curates, from whom the Church might be supplied with future incumbents.

It has also been objected that a great number of persons, who now take holy orders without any other prospect than that of obtaining a curacy, would cease to go into the Church, on account of the increased difficulty of obtaining

* Bishops, in former days, kept a number of young men in their houses, from which the Church was supplied with ministers.—*Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book v., p. 323.

curacies; and that hence that connection which, by their means, now subsists between the Church and those classes of society to which they generally belong—namely, the yeomen, the richer farmers, and the more respectable tradesmen—would be severed, to the great injury of the Establishment. This argument has been pressed upon me by a friend of great abilities and learning. I cannot, however, allow that any such consequence would follow. On the other hand, I think that more persons of these classes would enter the* Church; but that, instead of being curates all their lives, they would become incumbents of small livings.

Lord Wynford's defence of the construction of the old law respecting pluralities is to me surprising. Speaking of the thirty reputed miles in the act being construed as meaning forty-five statute miles, he is reported to have said, "In consequence of this construction, many families have purchased livings that are

* Fewer of the sons of the gentry of the country would take orders. One small living would not hold out a sufficient inducement for them. I know that it will be said there are at present upwards of 400 livings under £40 a-year, and many of these under £30, and some under £20, and that of such livings you must allow pluralities. In reply to this I have only to say, that if my suggestion (p. 207), with regard to putting a small tax upon all the larger livings, in proportion to their value, were adopted, for the augmentation of these small livings, they might soon be considerably increased in value.

more than forty miles asunder, and such livings have been held together by members of those families. I, therefore, contend that any alteration of that construction of the law which has so extended the limits of such distance from thirty to forty-five miles, will be attended with much inconvenience, and, in my opinion, will operate with the greatest possible injustice."— This construction, he says, has been put upon the law for more than a century, and, therefore, it ought not to be altered. And hence it seems that every abuse, however gross, which may happen to have crept into our ecclesiastical polity in by-gone ages, is to be venerated for the sake of its antiquity. Because an abuse has grown into an established custom, it must be "the greatest possible injustice" to correct it. Does Lord Wynford forget the injustice which is done to the inhabitants of those parishes which pay tithes to a non-resident incumbent, owing to their being deprived of the advantages which these tithes were established for the purpose of procuring for them? They are thus robbed in things both spiritual and temporal; and the evils which arise from this injustice overbalance, a hundred fold, the "inconvenience" which would arise to private families from the total abolition of pluralities. I presume that Lord Wynford thinks that the le-

gislature was guilty of injustice when it increased the fine inflicted for the non-residence of incumbents, and also when it passed a law to raise the salaries of curates. If ecclesiastical benefices are regarded in the light of private property (and his Lordship seems to view them in this light), these acts interfered with private property quite as much as would an act to abolish the system of pluralities. I would request Lord Wynford to meditate upon these words of *Dean Prideaux* :—" I press not (says he) for the minister's salary, without having a thorough respect to the end for which it is ordained ; i.e., the support of God's worship, and the promoting of his honour among us. For, as I think that an honourable and sufficient maintenance for the minister" [can the present stipends of curates be thus denominated ?] " is absolutely necessary for the successful carrying on of the ministerial work ; so I heartily wish, and do as earnestly press, that where there is such a maintenance, all care may be taken to make the minister faithfully discharge all those duties in order hereto, for which that maintenance was given. The severest laws in this case cannot give us any just cause to repine hereat. For since the assignment of the maintenance is from the state, they have a right to exact the service, and make such laws for it, as they shall judge will best enforce

the due performance of it." I would also beg him to listen to the good *Bishop Bedell* :—
 "Plainly (saith he) I do thus think, that of all the diseases of the Church in these times, next to that of the corruption of our courts, this of pluralities is the most deadly and pestilent."—
 He thought it "a vain, and indeed an impudent thing, for a man to pretend that he answered the obligation of so sacred a trust and so holy a vow, by hiring some mercenary curate to perform offices, since the obligation was personal." And he mentions the severe reflection which this practice drew from a witty man :—"When (said he) such betrayers and abandoners of that trust, which Christ purchased with his own blood, found good and faithful curates, that worthily performed the obligations of the pastoral care, the incumbent should be saved by proxy, but be damned in person." I would also entreat his Lordship (who has on many occasions evinced no ordinary zeal in the cause of religion) to hearken to this language of *Bishop Burnet* :—
 "If (saith he) men had a just notion of this holy function, and a right sense of it before they were initiated into it, those scandalous abuses of plurality of benefices with cure, non-residences, and the hiring out that trust to pitiful mercenaries at the cheapest rate, would soon fall off. These are

things of so crying a nature, that no wonder if the wrath of God is ready to break out upon us. These are abuses that even the Church of Rome is ashamed of, and are at this day generally discountenanced all France over. Queen Mary, here in England, in the time of Popery, set herself effectually to root them out. And that they should be still found among Protestants, and in so reformed a Church, is a scandal that may justly make us blush. * * They who are guilty of these disorders, who clothe themselves with the wool but have not fed the flock, have much to answer for—both to God, for the neglect of those souls for which they are to give an account, and to the world, for the reproach they have brought on this Church and on the sacred functions.” And I would have him to bear in mind, that “many persons (as *Prideaux* says) have been drawn to desert our communion on account of pluralities only;” and that the celebrated Lord Rochester declared on his death-bed, that this was one of the main causes which made him an atheist.

If Lord Wynford will duly meditate upon the declarations of these illustrious men, and, ceasing to view the question of pluralities merely as a lawyer, will look at it as a Christian statesman, we shall not again see him opposing a Bill, of

which the object is to diminish the number of pluralists.*

I hope, also, that your Grace, having succeeded in carrying a measure,† of which the object is to lessen the number of pluralities, will have the boldness ere long to introduce one for their total abolition. I am sure when your Grace reflects that‡ 4809 parishes are without resident incumbents, owing to a want of fit habitations, 632 from miscellaneous causes, and 340 owing to the incumbents holding cathedral and college offices—in all 5781 : I am sure, when your Grace reflects upon this lamentable state of the Church, that you cannot justify, upon any sound principle, the permitting of even 700 more to be absent from their benefices, owing to pluralities ;

* The Earl of Eldon and Lord Tenterden have also viewed the question of pluralities as lawyers rather than as statesmen, and divided in the minority of twelve against the clause for limiting the distance at which they may be held to thirty statute miles. How the Earl of Eldon can reconcile this conduct with the sentiments expressed by him on May 21st, 1813, I know not. He is reported to have then said, when opposing the "Stipendiary Curates' Bill," "If residence were the intention of this measure, why not enforce the residence of the incumbent by declaring that, if he did not reside, he should forfeit the living. That there should be a resident clergyman in every parish was most desirable."

† The Bill has passed in the Lords, and there can be no doubt as to its passing in the Commons.

‡ These may not be the *precise* numbers at the present moment, but they must be nearly so.

and I feel confident, from the high character which your Grace has always maintained, that you will never be willing to tolerate that which you are unable to defend.

I have been given to understand that the Bishop of London has made some very severe animadversions upon my publication on *The Institution and Abuse of Ecclesiastical Property*, and that he denies the truth of some of the positions laid down in it. I, therefore, take this opportunity of respectfully stating to his lordship, that I am prepared to defend every position laid down in that work. It might be difficult for me to contend with any misrepresentations or perversions put forth by anonymous writers in periodical publications; but if his lordship—(and when I reflect upon the inferiority of my mental endowments, and the still greater inferiority of my literary acquirements, I know that I should encounter fearful odds),—but if his lordship will condescend to enter the arena with me, and to dispute calmly the truth of what I have advanced, and the expediency of the measures which I have suggested, I shall feel much honoured by being permitted to defend myself against such an antagonist.

With sentiments of the highest esteem for your Grace's character, and with a grateful

acknowledgment of your Grace's zeal for the
welfare of our Ecclesiastical Establishment,

I subscribe myself,

Your Grace's most obedient

And faithful servant,

EDWD. HULL.

Liverpool, Oct. 3, 1831.

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